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ABSTRACT

As the Mexican American community multiplies and strengthens its position across the United States, its civic and religious celebrations expand in number and visibility. Through periodic observances, unequivocally Mexican cultural traditions have materialized in the secular and spiritual domains of American public spaces. This paper examines the commemoration of Holy Week in Omaha, Nebraska. Mexicans celebrate Holy Week, one of the most important events in the Catholic liturgy, in remarkable public spectacles. The reenactment of Christ's crucifixion galvanizes religious beliefs, emotions, and community solidarity through the participation of families, friends, religious associations, and community organizations. In Omaha, Guadalupe parish was established in 1919 and is the hub of a rapidly growing Hispanic population. As a community center, the parish provides extensive legal, educational, health, and counseling services. Since 1993, the Hispanic community of South Omaha has staged the religious drama of the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. A devoted parishioner who oversees the Guadalupe youth center and choir selects the actors from the youth group. For 40 days, the participants meet twice a week for religious studies and rehearsals. The aim is to keep Mexican traditions alive by instilling in children and young adults appreciation for the culture and devotion to its rituals. (Contains 18 references.) (SV)

GOOD FRIDAY IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA: A MEXICAN CELEBRATION*

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Good Friday in Omaha, Nebraska: A Mexican Celebration

In the past twenty-five years, the number of Latino immigrants in the U.S. has increased dramatically. Their influx has shifted the demographic composition of the country and deeply impacted American popular culture. In this way, the national commemorative calendar has had its share of additions and accommodations. Civic and religious celebrations of Latino origin and flavor have been incorporated locally and nationally and are observed regularly. Community associations, grass-root organizations, business people, commercial sponsors, philanthropists, media and government agencies fiercely compete to organize any and all celebrations. Common feasts are the *Cinco de Mayo*, *El Grito*, *Calle Ocho*, *El Dia de la Raza*, *Los Reyes*, *Dia de Muertos*, and Hispanic Heritage month, just to enumerate a short list. Mariachis and bandas accompany parades, speeches, and public festivities. Food vendors of *tacos* and all sorts of *antojitos* fill the air with its inviting aroma while merchants offer a myriad of arts and crafts in nearby booths or by street vendors. More and more nationwide Latino festivities are common occurrences and

less of an idiosyncratic happening. The celebrations have become an undeniable ingredient of the ever-expanding ethnic tapestry of American popular culture. Most of the observances are of Mexican origin in logic correspondence to the composition of the Hispanic community, with a majority of Mexican descent.

As the Mexican community multiplies and strengthens its footing across the U.S., its civic and religious celebrations expand in number and visibility. Through periodic observances the unequivocal Mexican cultural traditions have materialized in the secular and spiritual domains of the American public spaces. Deeply embedded in the Mexicans is their affiliation to the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, patriotic remembrances or the memorial of the *Dia de Muertos* have crossed the border without the formality of a visa, ventured further north and surfaced in the denominated Heartland of America. Mexican and Mexican-American festivities are variegated but in all of them, the spirit of community, ethnic identity, and the ritual of tradition are manifest. This paper will focus on the highlights of the commemoration of Holy Week in Omaha, Nebraska. It relates the background of the religious celebration and refers to the historical configuration of the Mexicans in Nebraska.

Among the most visible features of Mexican popular culture, at home and abroad, is its public display of gaiety, fanfare, rhythmic sounds and color. The close to six thousand yearly civic and religious feasts observed in Mexico bespeaks of this celebratory spirit. To outsiders it is a culture identified by fiestas, carnivals, massive demonstrations of religious fervor, and in the political domain by the rowdy crowds during patriotic commemorations and demonstrations. Nothing more explicit than the popular Mexican saying *todo se hace en bola* (everything is celebrated in masse.) To the Mexicans, celebrations, secular or religious, express and reinforce their sense of community, national pride, ethnic identity, and the inkling of belonging. According to Octavio Paz, fiestas are the only luxury for the sorrowful Mexicans, and the one occasion when they converse with God, country, neighbors, friends and family.¹ However, beyond the melancholic aphorism of Paz, the festive spirit expresses cultural fortitude and an unwavering attachment to a solid heritage built

¹ Octavio Paz, "Todos los Santos, Dia de Muertos," *Evergreen Review*, No. 7 (New York, 1959), pp. 22-27 in Lewis Hanke, *Modern Latin America. Continent in Ferment, Vol. I, Mexico and the Caribbean*. (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1959), p. 174.

through the centuries. It is the elan condensed in the expression of *mexicanidad*.

Religious observances constitute a significant element of the Mexican public pageantry. In these events converge new and old Catholic rituals, indigenous practices, and folklore. In the public spaces the social and cultural hierarchies fade. For the most part, they are solemn gatherings where spirituality and faith are openly displayed. They are, as well, the very few episodes that momentarily eclipse class distinctions, and the personal becomes collective. In the same manner, the celebrations dissolve, even if momentarily, ethnic divisions and social tensions. The massive character of the events and its religious content contribute to the social equalization of the crowd. Gatherings of million and a half plus on the courtyard of the Basilica de Guadalupe every December 12, and Good Friday in Ixtapalapa attest to the vibrancy and tangible appeal of the celebrations.

Mexicans celebrate Holy Week, one of the most important religious milestones of the Catholic liturgy, in remarkable public spectacles. Since Colonial times, the play of the “Way of the Cross” has been performed by members of *cofradías* led by a *mayordomo* of a town or a *barrio* in Mexico City. Continuous

reenactment makes them vital feasts and renews the cultural sense of identity. Among the most flamboyant plays are the ones staged in Ixtapalapa, Mexico City, San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, and in Ajijic in the northern State of Jalisco. There is no Holy Week celebration too small or people too poor to stand up to the occasion. Often the plays are organized, directed and produced by parish priests and Church congregations. In most instances, government institutions are involved in the strategic planning and provide technical support. Police, Red Cross and Fire Department are on site to assist the multitudes.

Several centuries of the performance—each local or regional commemoration has its own chronology—have made the annual event a magnificent theatrical production. It has the fancy of a professional happening. The reenactment of the Christian drama galvanizes religious belief, emotion and communal solidarity. It entails an intricate mix of family relations, *compadrazgos*, fraternal societies, community networks, religious associations, and political organizations.

The event has serious economic implications for organizers, actors and the throngs of revelers. Organizers and participants alike have to disburse money for costumes or its

rental, food, and of course, alcoholic beverages. The crowd invests in soft drinks, ice cream, *antojitos* and gadgets. In Mexico, where there is a crowd there is money to be made by the swarms of petty vendors that assail the *peregrinos*. *Fiestas* and *procesiones* are a God sent occasion and people made opportunities for those in the informal market. Especially, because for them city gatherings are means of survival. To the vendors, their petitions to the Virgin of Guadalupe and the saints are signs that *Dios aprieta pero no ahorca* as the popular adage goes. Home parties usually accompany the public fanfare after the procession. These involve plenty of food and hard liquor: *pulque*, *mescal*, *tequila*, and nowadays Bacardi rum for relatives and friends. In private and in public, the fiestas are costly but to the participants, it is money well spent. The economic and material fallout of the festivities is an inseparable part of the complex social mesh that underpins the event. It is the cultural significance of the commemoration what is consequential to the participants.

The reenactment of the *Way of the Cross* has deep rooted symbolic meaning and its strength has not faltered with the sweeping secularization process of modern Mexico. Nor have it been curbed by profound economic crisis, growing inflation,

massive unemployment or mounting crime. It has had the opposite effect. National adversities are added inducement to hold the ritual. It is precisely the importance attributed to the promise of fulfillment and the idea of deliverance embedded in the celebration what is meaningful.

Deep felt cultural attachment to religious celebrations has carried across the border for centuries and has mushroomed in the U.S. More precisely, they have been always present among the Mexicans and their American children. Their importance resides in their mass effect as they are more visible today than ever in the Northern Plains.

The Guadalupe Parish

Holy Week commemoration and Good Friday are organized by the Catholic Church of the Virgin of Guadalupe which is the main parish of the Hispanic community in Omaha, a community that is growing at an amazing speed. A recent release of the Census Bureau estimates 72,519 Hispanics in Nebraska.² Other figures report around 85,000 or close to 5 percent of the

² Cindy Gonzalez, "Latinos' Numbers Double in '90s To 4.4% of Nebraska Population," *Omaha World Herald*, September 17, 1999, p. 23.

population of the state.³ Mexicans nationals and Mexican-Americans represent more than 80 percent of the community. The other Hispanics are mostly Central Americans and a few South Americans.

The Guadalupe Parish is the main pivot of the Hispanic community in Omaha, the state and neighboring counties in Iowa across the Missouri River. The Guadalupe had very humble beginnings when it was established in 1919 in a rented room over a baker's shop. At that time, the Mexican population and its descendents in the city and the state had approximately 1,500 registered members.

Records show that since 1910, several Mexican families were among the residents settled in the area. This was close to the stockyards and meat packing houses where most of the men were employed. However, the presence of Mexicans in Omaha and the state are documented to the early beginnings of the city in 1854. With certainty, it was with the coming of the railroad construction in 1860 that the Mexicans established permanent residence.

³ Number reported by Javier Chagoya, Mexican Consul, Denver, Colorado. Personal conversation. Omaha, Nebraska, May 20, 1999.

The founding priest of La Guadalupe was the Augustinian father Leonardo Azcona who was assigned to the parish of the Holy Ghost in North Omaha and who had come from Mexico. At the request of the Mexicans, the priest took charge of the community's religious needs by celebrating Mass, administering services in Spanish and becoming its spiritual guide and advisor. The miniscule community soon began to grow and root but the Guadalupe was placed on hold when Fr. Azcona was recalled to Mexico in 1923. In 1928, as a result of the endeavors of the community, the church reopened its doors at a modified store but still located in South Omaha. The priest was the Mexican Mario Alba who came to take charge of the parish and the community. By 1930, the ill effects of the Depression had reduced significantly the number of Mexicans in the state, but over 900 of them remained in the Omaha area periodically drifting to the sugar beet fields of Western Nebraska. Regardless of the drive to move south, the ones that stayed recognized that Nebraska was, after all, their home. La Guadalupe church remained at the store until 1944. By that year the number of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans had grown to twice the size of 1930. The expanding number of parishioners thought the store was more than an inadequate place

for worship and decided it was time to give La Guadalupe a room of its own. Through extraordinary efforts at fund-raising with the usual *tamaladas*, *enchilada* nights, *rifas*, *menudo* Saturdays and *tianguis* sales, besides individual and business contributions the Guadalupe Church opened its welcoming doors to the community at its present location in 1951. The present building seats 350 and at the services people stand on the halls and outside the doors.

The Augustinian Order left Omaha in 1987. The parish was then incorporated to the extensive Archdiocese of Omaha. La Guadalupe is today under the leadership of Father Damian Zuerlin, appointed in 1990 to oversee the parish. It provides an extensive network of assistance and umbrella of protection. La Guadalupe serves as support base and cultural cement for the community. It embraces the newcomers and addresses their material and spiritual needs. To the old and new Hispanics, residents and transients, the parish is a familiar welcoming environment with Spanish language services and a listening ear. Mainly, La Guadalupe is a rights advocate of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, and patron of all Latino migrants' rights as it provides legal aid, instruction and education services, moral support, health services and economic relief. La Guadalupe is

considered by the Hispanics of Omaha and Nebraska the heart of the community and by their own recognition South O's meeting place and melting pot of the Hispanic diversity in Nebraska

La Guadalupe is located in the middle of the Hispanic neighborhood of South Omaha. This part of town houses the majority of the Hispanics in the city. It is the Southhood or South O as its neighbors call it. It has been the Latino hamlet of Omaha since the early days of the community. The murals painted on long walls, by young artists of the community, bespeaks of their visible presence. The murals bear desert landscapes, cacti, birds, mountains and beautiful children. Girls with their hair braided with red, white and green ribbons. The murals are painted with the palette of deep reds, blues, and green hues and the must have *rosa mexicano*.

South Omaha is dotted with a considerable number of businesses, restaurants and grocery stores. Spanish is the lingua franca and resident and costumers can virtually find any Latin American food specialty, CDs, video, magazine, and homemade Latin American goods and wares. South Omaha hosts private, state, and federally funded outreach centers such as the Chicano Awareness Center, Indian-Chicano Center, Salvation Army Thrift

Store, and the *Nuevo Mundo* Newspaper. Not many blocks away is the Museo Latino, center for cultural activities, exhibits, fiestas, celebrations and temporary host for the three to four annual visits of the Mobile Mexican Consulate from Denver.

La Guadalupe, the church and its annex houses the parish offices, residential quarters, meeting places and a large area dedicated to service the community. Aside from providing the parishioners with regular religious services, according to Catholic liturgy, it handles the customary Hispanic weddings, christenings, *quinceañeras*, and funerals. The offices are always bustling with activities oriented to accommodate people in need. Walk-ins can find a helping hand and direction to housing, clothing, health providers and food. Educational services are one of its main priorities. In the Annex, English as a Second Language(ESL) and Survival English are taught. At the same time, special classes are held to prepare residents waiting for their citizen tests. There are orientation sessions and conferences concerning immigration law and its messy paper work. A job placement service is constantly finding work for those who approach the center for referrals and recommendations.

In 1998, the growth of the Hispanic population and the increasing demand for the parish services moved the archdiocese of Omaha to place the church of Saint Agnes under the jurisdiction of La Guadalupe. Located within walking distance, St. Agnes provided the much needed relief for space. The church can seat 500 people and is much more spacious in its halls than La Guadalupe. Its school building is now a nursery and elementary school for migrant children. St. Agnes and La Guadalupe provide the foundations and the organizational support for all Catholic celebrations.

Good Friday in Omaha

Since 1993, on Good Friday, the Hispanic community of South Omaha, Nebraska has staged the religious drama of the Stations of the Cross, the Via Crucis. The commemoration is fraught with the intensity and passionate devotion of participants and members of the procession. It is an enactment that parallels the ritual as it has been historically performed in Mexico.

In earnest, the leading actors play their roles as heart felt as possible: Jesus Christ, the Virgin, Pontius Pilate, the Roman

soldiers riding horses or afoot, Mary Magdalene, Veronica, Simon the Cyrene and other performers.

On the front yard of the Church Hall of La Guadalupe, to the amazement of unfamiliar onlookers, Jesus and the two thieves are hoisted and tied to their wooden crosses in a replication of the crucifixion. This could be a familiar event featured in any Mexican town was it not for the climate conditions, which is one of the main distinctions and sobering reminder of the alien environment. Unlike the Mexican celebrations held under sunny bright-blue skies, dry winds, and warm weather, the early spring conditions in Nebraska often envelope the participant with overcast skies, frigid temperatures and a piercing wind chill. The liturgical calendar which determines that Easter must be held the first Sunday after the first full moon of Spring is too early in the Northern latitude for mild friendly weather. The flowering magnolia tree in the Church yard and its greening lawn are only a prelude of the nearing warm spell but it is not a consolation to the participants who have to grapple with the cold.

According to the Catholic liturgical calendar, lent officially begins on Ash Wednesday. It is around this date, when the chargé of the Youth Center of La Guadalupe, Adela Rodriguez, starts to

prepare for the reenactment of the Via Crucis.⁴ The actors are selected from this group of young parishioners. During the next forty days, they meet on Tuesdays and Saturdays for doctrinal studies and rehearsals. Provisions are made to accommodate working and school schedules, and certainly, Nebraska weather conditions. She writes the scripts and the individual lines for each of the participants. Adela draws all the information from her own experience and searches for additional documentation to write the scripts. She pens the lines in Spanish, using a simple language and an appealing rhyme.

Adela was born in San Jose de la Boca, in the Municipality of Los Tepehuanes in the Northwestern state of Durango. She is young, dynamic, musically talented, and a devoted Catholic. Adela loves her country and her culture with an unswerving passion. She has committed herself, as a mission, to develop and preserve Mexican Catholic popular lore beyond the border, time and the secularization pull. Most of her family lives in Omaha, but she and the family keep firm ties with the rest of the kin back home. They visit Durango at least once a year and the family maintains constant communication. Adela is married and has an eight year

⁴ Personal interviews with Adela Rodriguez. Omaha, Nebraska, June 1999.

old boy. Her husband works in the meat packing industry and the three make up a tightly knit family. They came to Omaha in December of 1991 and the following year, Adela became a volunteer at La Guadalupe. She played the guitar and sang during Sunday mass. From the time of her arrival, Adela became increasingly involved in the community work at the parish. Soon it diverted to the Hispanic Ministry of the archdiocese of Omaha but only for a short time. Adela was called back to La Guadalupe and given the task of organizing activities for the young members of the parish.

Adela's active participation with Catholic based community organization dates back to her childhood and teenage years in Durango. In her hometown she was an active member of the parish youth group and of the local Base Christian Community (Comunidad Eclesial de Base). She worked as a catechist, choir member, and performer in the Pastorelas during the Christmas season. Adela found the Catholic community work so appealing that when she finished Junior High she opted for conventual life. She thought then that she was destined to be a nun and following her calling, she entered a nunnery in Zamora, Michoacan. In Zamora she prepared for religious life and studied high school with

the order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Close to taking her vows, Adela searched her heart and decided that a nun's life was not what she had envisioned. Her decision was not hard. She simply thought she would not have been happy with the commitment, she could still work with the church and went back home. In San Jose, she married and remained close to the parish and her volunteer work. In the mid-eighties, the shock waves of the Mexican economic crisis hit Los Tepehuanes. In 1989, Adela and her husband lost their jobs. With no relief in sight for the dwindling economy, they managed for a while by taking temporary odd jobs. Her brother and sisters, already in the U.S., offered their assistance by helping them relocate. In 1990, they moved first to Los Angeles and in 1991 settled in Omaha. In this Midwestern city, the economy was flourishing and jobs were plentiful. With family support, they had little problems in starting a new life.

In 1992, Adela approached Father Damian with the idea of reenacting the Way of the Cross on Good Friday. Because she was already the chorus organizer and had her following with the young parishioners, Father Damian gave his approval. Working with the sisters of the parish, the youth group became the base for liturgical and secular commemorations: choirs for regular masses and private

functions: *Mañanitas*, *Posadas*, *Pastorelas*, *Quinceañeras*, weddings, parties, fund raisers, sport events, and Holy Week. The initial year was dedicated to small performances and to strengthen the youth group. According to Adela's own words, they had a humble and simple beginning. It was the ground work for what was to come.

Adela's work went from volunteer to be a full time employee of the parish. She honed her organization skills by undertaking the job with unbridled enthusiasm and the zeal of the missionary that lives in her. Adela has vowed to keep her revered Mexican religious traditions alive by celebrating and doing things in Omaha the Mexican way. She is well aware that keeping the traditions alive and well depends on instilling in the children and young adults' appreciation for the culture and devotion for its rituals.

Teaching the young Mexican-Americans to love their traditions has not been difficult. Adela has on her side the nineties tidal wave of new Mexican migration into the Midwest. A rush of migration, both legal and undocumented, has recreated and revitalized the Mexican communities in the U.S. There are virtual transplants of small towns from Guanajuato, Coahuila, and San

Luis Potosi in South Omaha. In 1998 estimates advanced that the area housed around twenty thousand Hispanics and eighty percent of them were Mexicans or of Mexican descent. To this communal Diaspora it should be added the tightening of the relationships between the newcomers and their families across the border. Relative inexpensive calling cards, cell phones, more ways to travel, faster and cheaper means of transportation, instant money-grams *dinero al minuto*, and improved earnings have contributed greatly to solidify Mexican communities in U.S. soil.

Many scholars and community leaders agree that with or without North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the thriving North American economy of the 1990s released a powerful and irresistible pull on the unemployed and underemployed Mexican labor pool. Strapped for manual and menial labor, the Nebraska economy keeps a lid on Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) attempts at curbing the undocumented influx. Two years ago the INS launched "Operation Vanguard" trying to keep the labor force at the meat packing industry under tight migratory controls. Unannounced raids and constant checks on personnel records resulted in mass deportations. Under pressure by business organizations and

advocates of migrant communities, the program came under fire, suspended for a few months and reinstated recently.

For Adela and La Guadalupe more the reason to keep holding the celebrations and garnering the patronage of the community. The more visible the community is the less likely the pressure on the undocumented to be successful. With unremitting passion she keeps an eye on her young flock and eagerly recruits the newcomers into her singing and devout group of young Catholics and ardent *Guadalupanos*.

The young adults that approach the parish are voluntarily enrolled into the gamut of activities held by the Church. What they will do is their own choice. Adela leads a group of twenty to twenty-five young men and women who are between fourteen and twenty-seven years of age. The group enacts the play on Good Friday. Many of its members have had similar experiences in their hometowns in Mexico or were close observers and followers. For several of them, that was the reason they approached the parish, for the possibility to resume church activities and have the sense of belonging to their cultural expanse in the remote prairies of the Midwest. In Mexico, they were members of parish or communal groups that traditionally staged the religious drama and held other

religious celebrations. For these young people, it was as simple as being part of a broader but known and familiar culture. According to their own explanations, it gave them sense of direction, abated their estrangement and instilled in them a strong feeling of attachment to tradition.

Margarito Ponce, performed during the 1999 commemoration as one of the thieves but he was Jesus on the previous reenactment. A native of Cuautla, Morelos, he was part of the passion plays as staged by the parish of Santa Ana and San Vicente de Paul in his hometown. He performed for about four years before moving to the U.S. and he is only twenty-four years old. He considers himself to be a seasoned actor. He also defines himself as a devout Catholic. In Omaha Margarito is a construction worker and is very active in church activities. Antonio Cedillo, another Cuautla native, performed Jesus. Close friend of Margarito and like him involved in the same Youth Group in Cuautla. Both crossed the border and move to Nebraska in 1997. When I first met Margarito at a rehearsal, it was relatively easy to detect previous experience. He vocalized his lines well with an impressive ease and he projected his voice. His body movements and mastery of the physical space were that of a veteran performer. Margarito and

Antonio love being part of the celebration and feel a strong attachment to the Guadalupe parish. Both plan to remain in the group and participate in the parish activities as long as they are in Omaha.

During the first two years of the commemoration of the Stations of the Cross it was staged in the parking lot of the parish. It was not until the third year that Adela decided it was time to move it into the surrounding area, the number of participants and peregrinos had grown beyond the capacity of the lot. For Adela it meant the taking of the neighborhood streets, as in Mexico. How else can you really occupy the public space and be seen and heard? Adela was right. The large number of parishioners attending the ceremony had multiplied exponentially and the parking lot was small and confined. Besides, if it was going to be like in Mexico, the performance had to be taken to the streets and the public had to be actively engaged. It also meant that as in Mexico, the public had to be actively involved, be part of the drama, live the Pasion. People had to pray, chant, and be emotionally engulfed by the enactment of the crucifixion. The participants had to grieve, boo or hiss at Pontius Pilate, curse the Roman soldiers and console Jesus and the Virgin. People had to be participants at the same time they

expiated their own personal Viacrucis. According to many of the participants, what else has been their pilgrimage into Omaha but a private Via Crucis?

Taking the play into the streets required permits from the city, fire and police departments. These challenges were met without major difficulties with letters and phone calls. In 1995 the performance took over the streets of South Omaha. Up to this date there has not been any incident that demanded intervention by the police or first aid from paramedics. The bare-breasted Jesus Christ and thieves have caught head-colds from the wintry weather but none of them suffered severe complications, except for their runny noses.

Every year the crowd is larger. The 1999 estimated attendance was of seven hundred and fifty to probably one thousand individuals. The number of participants could have been larger but in the Midlands and largely on the U.S. Good Friday is a regular working day. Exception made of Catholic schools and those with work schedules which allows them to have off that afternoon.

After the crucifixion, the last two Stations of the Cross, out of fourteen, are observed on the south yard of the church. At night

another performance of the passion is staged. This is for those who were not able to attend the afternoon celebrations. The presentation at the Church is in a much smaller scale but as intense as the earlier performance.

The celebration on Holy Saturday, *Sábado de Gloria*, has not been yet incorporated to the Holy Week in Omaha. Even in Mexico, they have been sobered for decades. The unexpected water baths inflicted on passers-by have been forbidden given the scarcity of the precious liquid. However, Adela does expect to incorporate the burning of Judas with its accompanying chanting, dancing and merrymaking. In effect, the burning of Judas is an integral part of the Mexican Holy Week. On this day effigies of politicians and perceived villains of the people are made with old clothes, paper mache and filled up with straw and gunpowder. The effigies are hung like *piñatas* and they are so finely done that almost anyone can identify the individuals portrayed. At mid-morning they are set afire among mockery, laughter and roaring cheers from the crowd. The symbolism of the feast cannot be stressed enough. It is, and has been, for those involved in the Holy Week romp, their greatest opportunity of getting even with authority figures. What can be better than ridiculing, blowing up

and burning to ashes the effigy of a *licenciado*? For the crowd it is an allegorical form of justice finally served for those real and perceived wrong-doings and abuses. The tradition has not withered in Mexico and Mexicans in Omaha ask when will this part of the celebration be incorporated. One can only wonder whom would the Mexicans choose as the Judas to be burned. Adela is not intimidated by the prospects of bureaucratic obstacles with the Fire Department, City Council and Police, as she plans to add the Judas burning and she will file the necessary paper work for next year's Holy Week. In this manner, the Omaha Holy Week celebration will be closer to be as "como en Mexico." Adela only yearns: "if the weather cooperated a little bit more, everything would be just perfect!"

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